

Message Text

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15

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 INR-07 L-02 ACDA-05

NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 USIA-06 TRSE-00 SAJ-01

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FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5708

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY OSLO

USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 1967

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, NL

SUBJ: REPLACEMENT FIGHTER: SCENARIO FOR GON DECISION
FOR PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE

1. MOD INFORMATION DIRECTOR SLIGHTING TOLD DCM APRIL 16 THAT DEFENSE MINISTER VREDELING WILL PROPOSE AND EXPECTS TO OBTAIN FINAL GON DECISION TO PURCHASE THE F-16 AT APRIL 25 MEETING OF COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, WITH ANNOUNCEMENT OF DECISION TO BE MADE ON APRIL 29 (SENIOR AIR FORCE SOURCES CONFIRM THE APRIL 25 DATE BUT UNDERSTAND THAT THE ANNOUNCEMENT MAY BE MADE IMMEDIATELY THEREAFTER). ON BASIS OF THAT TIMING, MOD IS NOW TALKING TO PARLIAMENTARY LEADERS ABOUT SCHEDULING DEBATE ON F-16 PURCHASE MAY 13-14 SO THAT GON WILL BE ABLE TO SIGN LETTER OF INTENT ON MAY 15.

2. SLIGHTING MENTIONED TWO POTENTIALLY SERIOUS PITFALLS IN THIS SCENARIO. FIRST, THOSE IN PARLIAMENT WHO ARE OPPOSED TO THE F-16 PURCHASE OR TO THE PURCHASE OF ANY REPLACEMENT AIRCRAFT MAY SUCCEED IN DELAYING THE DEBATE
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BY A FEW WEEKS. SECOND, EVEN IF THE DEBATE IS HELD

WHEN PLANNED SLIGTING ANTICIPATES THAT A MAJORITY OF THE LABOR PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP WILL VOTE AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT DECISION. (HE RULES OUT POSSIBILITY THEY WOULD VOTE FOR OR ABSENT THEMSELVES FROM VOTING.) SUCH ACTION OF ITSELF WOULD NOT HAVE TO BE CRITICAL SINCE THERE IS AN OVERALL MAJORITY IN THE SECOND CHAMBER IN FAVOR OF THE F-16 PURCHASE. THE PROBLEM IS THAT VREDELING IS STILL SAYING THAT HE WILL RESIGN AS DEFENSE MINISTER IF HIS OWN PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP OPPOSES HIM ON THE DECISIVE VOTE. SLIGTING FOR ONE DID NOT THINK THIS WAS IDLE BLUFF ON VREDELING'S PART. FURTHERMORE, SLIGTING THOUGH (AS DOES TRANSPORTATION MINISTER WESTERTEP, A CATHOLIC MEMBER OF THE DEN UYL GOVERNMENT) THAT VREDELING'S RESIGNATION IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY ENTAIL RESIGNATION OF FONMIN VAN DER STOEL AND THIS BRING DOWN THE DEN UYL GOVERNMENT. SLIGTING CAUTIONED, THEREFORE, THAT WE WERE NOT OUT OF THE WOODS YET ON THE GON PURCHASE OF THE F-16. HE SUGGESTED, HOWEVER, THAT EFFORTS WOULD BE MADE TO PERSUADE VREDELING NOT TO RESIGN.

3. SLIGTING ASKED TWO QUESTIONS: HOW WOULD THE US REACT TO A DELAY IN THE SIGNING OF THE LETTER OF INTENT IF THAT WERE MADE NECESSARY BY A DELAY IN HOLDING THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE? SECONDLY, HAS THE US CONGRESS SCHEDULED HEARINGS ON THE US AIR FORCE DECISION TO PURCHASE 650 F-16S AND, IF SO, WHAT IS LIKELY TO BE FOCUS AND TENOR OF THE HEARINGS? DCM SAID HE WOULD SEEK ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS. WHEN SLIGTING INQUIRED ABOUT THE PRESENT STATE OF PLAY IN BELGIUM, DCM SAID THAT A GON ANNOUNCEMENT ON APRIL 25 TO PURCHASE THE F-16 COULD CYRSTALLIZE THE SITUATION IN BELGIUM AND SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASE THE CHANCES THAT THE GOB WOULD FOLLOW SUIT SOON THEREAFTER. IN ANY CASE, SLIGTING WAS TOLD (AS HE HAS BEEN SEVERAL TIMES BEFORE) THAT IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE FOR THE GON TO WAIT FOR BELGIUM TO ANNOUNCE FIRST FOR THE F-16.

4. IN SEPARATE CONVERSATION, MFA'S NATO DIRECTOR
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EXPRESSED HOPE THAT PARLIMENTARY DEBATE WILL NOT TAKE PLACE MID-MAY, WHEN PRIMIN DEN UYL WILL BE ABROAD AND THUS NOT ABLE TO PROVIDE VREDELING WITH SUPPORT VIS-A-VIS LABOR PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP. DIRECTOR SAID THIS PROBLEM HOPEFULLY WILL BE RESOLVED NEXT WEEK, EITHER BY SCHEDULING DEBATE EARLIER IN MAY OR DELAYING UNTIL AFTER PRIMIN'S RETURN. DIRECTOR THOUGHT IN LATTER EVENT GON MIGHT MEET US DEADLINE FOR LETTER OF INTENT

BY MAY 15 BY SUBMITTING LETTER WHICH QUALIFIED GON UNDER-
TAKING BY STATING IT IS SUBJECT TO PARLIAMENTARY ACTION.
GOULD

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